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cont

a) transferring a polynucleotide encoding an *Hte* mutation included in the strain deposited as ATCC No. 55962 into gram negative bacterial cells; and

b) treating the cells from (a) with a competency inducing procedure;

whereby competent cells are produced.

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5. (Amended) A method according to claim 3, wherein the competency inducing procedure comprises washing the cells with a buffer comprising at least two of potassium acetate, KCl, MnCl₂, CaCl₂, glycerol, rubidium chloride, and hexamine cobalt chloride.

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7. (Amended) A method according to claim 3, said method further comprising freezing the competent cells.

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9. (Amended) A strain according to claim 14, wherein cells of said strain have been made competent by a high competency induction procedure comprising washing the cells with a buffer comprising at least one of potassium acetate, KCl, MnCl₂, CaCl₂, glycerol, rubidium chloride, and hexamine cobalt chloride.

10. (Amended) A strain according to claim 9, wherein said cells of said strain have been frozen.

Please add the following new claims:

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14. An isolated strain of *E. coli*, comprising an *Hte* mutation included in the strain deposited as ATCC No. 55962 and having more efficient transformation with foreign plasmids than *E. coli* that lack such an *Hte* mutation.

15. A strain according to claim 14, wherein cells of said strain have been made competent.

16. A method for cloning or subcloning heterologous genetic material into a cell comprising cloning or subcloning heterologous genetic material into a cell according to claim 11.

17. A method for cloning or subcloning heterologous genetic material into a cell of a strain comprising cloning or subcloning heterologous genetic material into a cell of the strain according to any one of claims 14 and 2.